

A
HIGH SCHOOL

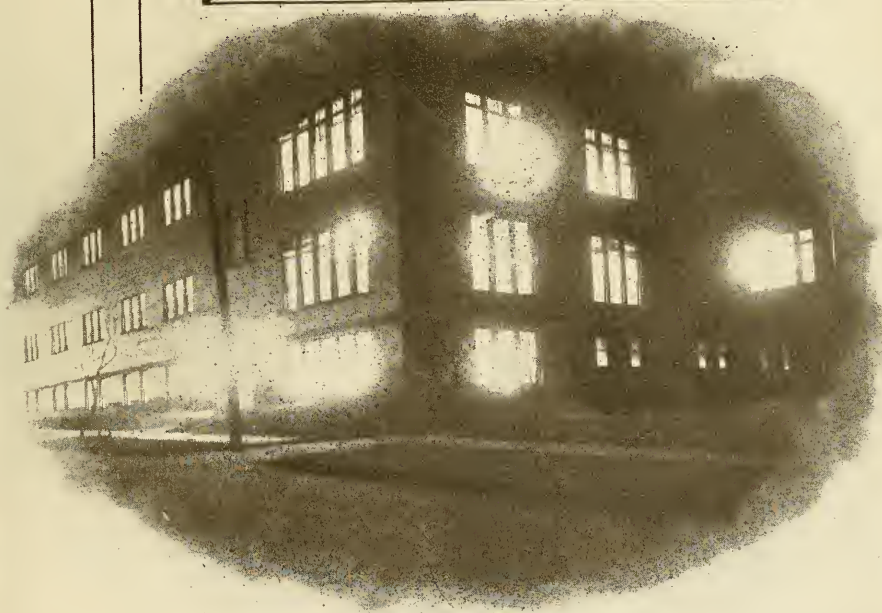
SOCIAL CENTER

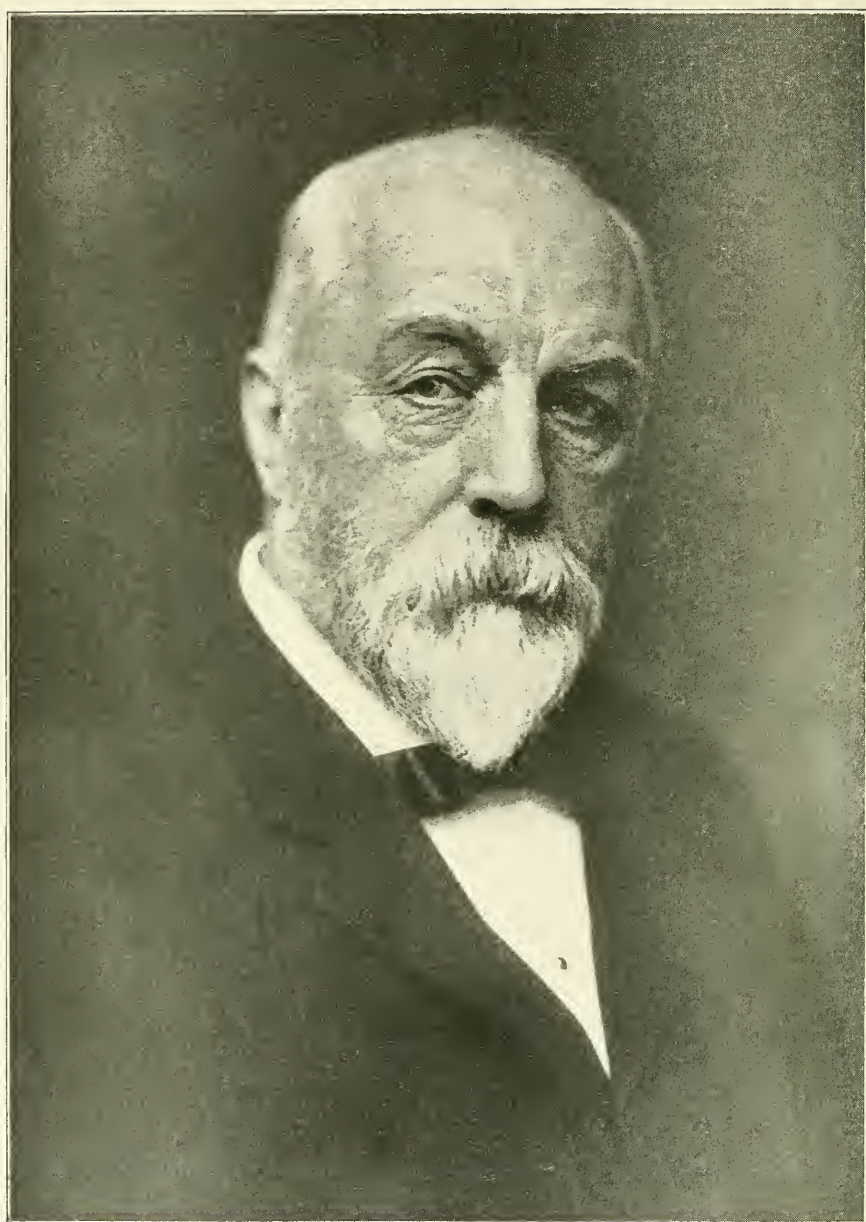
HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE
SOCIAL AND RECREATION WORK OF

THE
LA SALLE-PERU TOWNSHIP
HIGH SCHOOL



LA SALLE, PERU, OGLESBY,
ILLINOIS





F. W. MATTHIESSEN
(1835-1918)

A
HIGH SCHOOL
SOCIAL CENTER

HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE
SOCIAL AND RECREATION WORK OF

THE
LA SALLE-PERU TOWNSHIP
HIGH SCHOOL

James Wyatt Harris



LA SALLE, PERU, OGLESBY,
ILLINOIS



LC 233
L2M3

Personnel and Population

Township High School Board of Education

George A. Wilson, Sr., President

W. J. Clancy

H. E. Hackman

John R. Young

W. T. Bedford

Thomas N. Haskins, Secretary.

Social Center Staff

Thomas J. McCormack, M. A., LL.B.....Principal of High School
J. Wyatt Marrs, M. A.....Social Center Director
Alice R. Greene.....Instructor for Women and Girls
Vincent A. Kogoski.....Assistant for Men's and Boys' Work
Katherine Schalla.....Matron and Swimming Instructor
Allen Vohs Attendant
Fred Lakin Attendant
Myron Kirsch Attendant
John Marshall Attendant
George Hansen Attendant
Albert Hasse Attendant
Donald Harvey Attendant
Lawson Lindsay Attendant
Mildred Baker Attendant
Wilda Vroman Attendant
Mildred Gmeiner Attendant
James Flannery Caretaker

Population (1920)

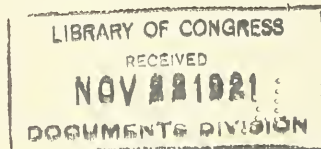
La Salle	13,050	Oglesby	4,135
Peru	8,869	La Salle-Peru Township.....	28,133

Some Nationalities (Estimated)

Polish	6,000	Italian	700
Other Slavic Races.....	4,000	Greeks	200

School Attendance

La Salle Public	1485	La Salle Parochial	1234
Peru Public	803	Peru Parochial	847
Oglesby Public	905	Township High School	551



1728 8 (2. Oct. 5) 5.9

THE SOCIAL CENTER STAFF



Introduction

The first published description of the work of the Township High School Social Center of La Salle, Peru and Oglesby was issued in October, 1915, just a year and six months after the establishment of the Center. This original description attained wide circulation and attracted considerable attention from educators, social workers and students of civic problems. The present publication contains, like its predecessor, the history of the institution, but aims further to describe and to characterize the work, now nearly eight years old.

That work presents many points of significant interest—especially in its method of financial support and in the formative effects which it has had upon similar institutions as well as in the educational influences which it has radiated to this and to neighboring communities.

The institution originated in the constructive civic imagination of the late Mr. F. W. Matthiessen, who, for many years having been pressed to establish a Y. M. C. A. in La Salle, and recognizing that the usefulness of such an institution in this particular community would have been impaired by its corporate historical character, consequently decided to establish the required machinery for popular recreational work in connection with a recognized public educational institution representing all three cities. In order to assure the continued interest of the public in the work and to perpetuate the existence of the Social Center as a permanent part of the political structure of the community, the condition of the donation of the Center was that it should be supported by public taxation.

The history of this movement is given in detail in the text. In any event, the present description, in addition to its value as information to educators and social workers, will partly take the form of a memorial to the civic genius of its founder, Mr. Matthiessen; and to make this tribute both concrete and emphatic the editors have published in an appendix the descriptive and eulogistic article which Mr. Graham F. Taylor wrote on Mr. Matthiessen for the October 1914 number of *The Survey*. Here the reader will find briefly outlined the story of Mr. Matthiessen's life and of his construc-

tive civic career. Further descriptions of Mr. Matthiessen's foundations and contributions to our community life will be found in the Annual Reports of the Hygienic Institute, with its elaborate associated activities, which Mr. Matthiessen founded and endowed, and in the publications on the La Salle Peru Township High School issued by the U. S. Bureau of Education (Bulletin, 1917, No. 35, and Rural School Letter No. 21, June 13, 1914; see also Bulletin No. 4 of Bureau of Memorial Buildings, War Camp Community Service, 124 E. 28th St., New York City.) Persons further interested in the social work of the Tri-Cities may be referred to the activities of the Tri-Cities Associated Charities, the administrative expenses of which, with a large part of the sustaining expenses, are defrayed by the entrance receipts to Deer Park, a part of the Matthiessen estate; to the Social Department of the Western Clock Company, La Salle-Peru, Illinois; to the La Salle City Playground Association with its history of Hegeler Park; to the voluntary Sewing and Industrial Schools of La Salle, Peru and Oglesby; to the activities of the Washington Park Playground of Peru, Illinois; and to the Women's Clubs of the three cities.

Nearly all the preceding work began as the work of voluntary associations, afterwards to be partly incorporated by law into the fixed political taxing structure of the community. This is usually the history of democratic progress. Progress begins with small voluntary organizations and is then finally made part of the automatic machinery of the state. Thus the story of the activities described or referred to in this pamphlet will be found to form an instructive chapter in the history of the methods by which Democracy realizes itself.

As to the financial mechanism by which the Social Center and the public athletic grounds of the Township High School are supported it will be interesting to note that while the funds for the buildings and the equipment were furnished by a private donor, yet the upkeep of the plant is provided for by public taxation from the High School educational fund, and that these taxes, representing the annual expenditure for the support of the Social Center, are equal to the interest on a fund as large as the original donation. The educational laws of the State of Illinois have made possible this extension of the facilities of the existing educational machinery.

A few words remain to be said regarding the wider educational influence of the Center.

The immediate beneficent results of the activities of the La Salle-Peru Township High School Social Center will be

apparent to the most superficial reader of this pamphlet. These spring even to the untutored eye. But there are deeper and ulterior effects of tremendous import, not capable of being measured or weighed, unseen in their development, but ultimately forming the foundations on which the whole spiritual superstructure of civilization is erected.

The education of a community proceeds not only through the direct activities of institutions formally devoted to this end, but also by the more subtle process of sociological diffusion. The ideas disseminated by a given institution affect first only the small group of individuals immediately attacked. At the start the effects appear to be feeble and inconspicuous. But the individuals affected, or as we may say, to use a medical simile, infected, act as carriers of these ideas and transmit by a species of intellectual and spiritual contagion the beneficent contamination they have received to all their associates. They act as foci for the spread of the new ideas, whether in education, citizenship, hygiene, recreation, or what not, and unconsciously propagate with hundred-fold efficiency the influences we fancied originally moulded the conduct of only a few. There is a contagion of excellence as well as a contamination of evil, and the laws of sociological imitation, which cause individuals to mimic one another in their thought and conduct, care for it that the good we implant with our imperfect educational machinery in a few is transmitted with automatic certainty to increasingly larger groups. The little pebble that we cast on the limitless expanse of the great social water makes a slight impact, but its effect is propagated by known sociological laws in increasingly wider and wider circles to the farthestmost bounds. This is the saving thought of all educational and welfare activity. Without it we should sink into irrevocable pessimism. The new welfare-institutions of this community, powerful and splendid as they are for so small a group of people, would otherwise be impotent, and the scratches that even with them we feebly make on the hardened surface of the great body politic would without its aid never sink into the hidden and sullen depths. In this thought the rankest disaffection may swallow solace, and the gloomiest pessimism see some light.

It could be easily estimated that four such plants as the present High School Social Center would be requisite to meet fully the recreational and community needs of the whole population of this Township. But at present this is financially and politically undreamable. A similar estimate, slightly modified, would be applicable to most of the other institutions above referred to. The extension of the full benefits of

these institutions, therefore, to all the people, even if all the people were disposed in will and mind to receive them, must ultimately be left to the slow operation of the laws of sociological imitation and contact. All are called, but not all submit to be chosen.

Numerous other subtle benefits to community thought and action might be attributed to the operation of these agencies. The very opposition that some of them arouse in stagnant and reactionary circles, the very quarrels and brawls that some of their activities have evoked, are of immense educational value, and have unconsciously illumined even the minds of their opponents. Broad-visioned men and women will see in these superficial ripples only the operation of a power making for greater enlightenment. Petty struggle and battle are the machinery by which democracy acquires repose for its ulterior ends. The machinery, by its very creaking, finds and adjusts itself.

The retroactive effects, further, of the recreational and community work of the High School Center, through its immediate benefits to children and adults not belonging to the school-group, are of incalculable value for the forming of a public opinion and sentiment favorable to the source from which these benefits emanate. Not only does the sense-satisfaction imparted by these activities to groups of individuals that might otherwise be disaffected or alienated react salutarly in the direction indicated, but the acquaintance thus unconsciously acquired under pleasant associations with an institution of higher learning automatically results in the moulding of a sound public feeling in support and approval of an agency that incidentally dispenses these benefits. And so Democracy again accomplishes, by reversion upon itself, its purposes.

Many other collateral results might be cited as evidence of the wide-spread beneficence of the activities here catalogued. But it will suffice to indicate the principal tendencies. The more palpable of those left unmentioned will occur to the most casual reader.

The pamphlet itself has been compiled for the information of educators and workers in the municipal and social service fields. The text has been written by the director of the Social Center, Mr. J. Wyatt Marrs. But many unnamed, in years long past and in many places, have made contributions to the work fully equal to the labor of those who appear officially in the titles; and none more effectively than Mr. George A. Wilson, Sr., president of the La Salle-Peru Township Board of Education, who has given years of quiet and unrequited labor to the consummation of a task before which

even the hardest spirits might have quailed. All successful social and civic work is impersonal. Individuals are its mere passing agents. The real author is the creative heart of the community, inarticulate and seeking no reward of honor.

THOMAS J. McCORMACK.

La Salle, Illinois, September, 1921.

History and Maintenance

The La Salle-Peru Township Social Center at La Salle, Illinois, was made possible by the munificence of the late F. W. Matthiessen of La Salle. The offer of a recreation building was made on the condition that the community would maintain it. In a special election the proposition was submitted to the voters of the township and was almost unanimously accepted. As a result, in 1914 a building was erected adjacent to the Township High School at the north and connected with it by a covered passage. At the same time, the gymnasium on the ground floor of the high school building was converted into a modern, commodious auditorium, and the old High School structure in part remodelled and completely renovated. These reconstructions, which included also a new central boiler house and heating plant, with new ventilating and humidifying apparatus, made necessary a total outlay of over \$100,000, of which \$25,000 was covered by a public bond issue.

The grounds on which the new building, athletic field and playground stand were also donated by Mr. Matthiessen, who himself did much of the planning. The athletic grounds were graded at Mr. Matthiessen's expense and represent possibly an additional outlay of some \$25,000. Mr. Matthiessen gave originally \$75,000 for the erection of the Recreation Building, and later donated further funds for an outdoor swimming pool. This was followed by a sum of about \$32,000 for the erection of an addition to the Recreation Building, and just before his death by \$40,000 for a second remodeling of the High School Building. The Township Board of Education also made considerable contributions to the new enterprise, and the citizens donated money for the erection of a concrete grand-stand on the athletic field costing \$2,500.

The cost of maintaining the Social Center is borne entirely by the Township Board of Education, which is an educational taxing body representing the cities of La Salle, Peru and Oglesby and the country districts, or Congressional Township Number 33, Range 1, N. E., with a total population of 28,133. The cost of maintaining the Center is approximately \$9,000 a year, which sum is paid out of the high school educational funds. The Social Center is essentially a part of the High

School and no attempt is made to make it self-supporting. However, the activities, in large part, pay for themselves, and the rental fees collected for the use of the party room and gymnasium cover practically all of the incidental expenses.

Advantages of Combining a Social Center with the High School

The advantages of this combination of a community center with the high school are obvious. In the first place, the building and equipment are used continuously from early in the morning until late at night. During the morning and early afternoon the gymnasium, swimming pool and dressing rooms are used by high school classes, and at noon high school students use the gymnasium, reception room, reading and game rooms. From 3:30 P. M. to 10:00 or 12:00 P. M., the building is open to the public. The High School and Social Center both use the same athletic grounds.

A second advantage is the fact that members of the Social Center staff can also serve as high school teachers. The director teaches economics and sociology in the high school and together with his assistant has charge of the high school boys' gymnasium classes. The instructor for women and girls teaches the high school girls' gymnasium classes. The matron and swimming instructor teaches high school girls as well as women and grade school girls.

Another important advantage is the fact that the older high school boys and girls can be used as Social Center attendants. About fifteen of these students are employed. They are paid twenty cents an hour for the time they are actually employed. This amount, small as it is, often enables deserving students to remain in school when otherwise they would be forced to leave. However, these attendants are selected not because of their need, but because of their fitness for the work.

A Brief Survey of the Tri-Cities

The three cities of La Salle, Peru and Oglesby are very interesting from an historic standpoint; but of greater importance in considering present-day conditions is the industrial aspect of the district. It is from this angle that much light can be shed upon the recreational needs of the community. The three cities are typical industrial centers, each presenting most of the intricate problems of industrialism. Moreover, the majority of the industries are such as demand unskilled labor, which accounts in the main for the large number of immigrants that have come into the three cities. The recreational problem, however, is made much easier by the fact that there are no negroes. Briefly the industries located in the township are: three cement mills, two zinc smelting works, a well-known clock factory, a plow and wheel factory, a chemical works, and a number of coal mines together with many smaller manufacturing concerns. However, the district is not entirely industrial; La Salle County boasts of a most fertile soil and according to the 1920 census is the fifth richest agricultural county in the United States.

As a result of this demand for unskilled labor, the mills and factories have always competed successfully against the schools, and the school mortality rate is exceedingly high. The demand for recreation has been particularly strong among this group of boys and girls, who have left school as soon as the law allowed. Until the establishment of the Social Center, however, no attempt had ever been made by the public to provide recreation, supervised or otherwise, either for adults or children. As a result commercial recreation grew and flourished, with little attention being paid to its character.

Opening and Growth

The Social Center was formally opened on May 21, 1914 by Governor Dunne. Since its opening the Center has grown naturally and spontaneously along lines best suited to local conditions, and under the watchful guidance and assistance of a trained staff, the Principal of the High School and a special committee of the Township Board of Education. From the start every effort has been made toward perfecting a well-rounded recreation center for the community. The natural expression of the people has been sought and stimulated so that the activities of the Center would really be the activities of the people and not something superimposed from the outside.

From the beginning the people took an enthusiastic interest in the Social Center. Much education was necessary, however, for the idea of the wider use of the school was strangely new. A policy of wide publicity has been followed consistently in the belief that it pays to advertise in public recreation work just as surely as it does in any business endeavor.

This campaign has been carried on through every available agency. Probably first in importance has been the co-operation accorded by the three daily newspapers. A most cordial relationship has existed from the inception of the work between the Center and the editors, and free space has always been at the disposal of the Center both for announcing approaching activities and for recording events as they occur. Probably next in importance has been the co-operation of the schools, both public and parochial. Whatever success may have attended the juvenile activities of the Center (and considerable attention has been paid to this phase of the work) must be attributed, in great measure, to the spirit of co-operation displayed by the schools. The acquaintance of the adults with the Center, has, in many cases, come through the children who took home the first news of its existence. Then the fact that the clergy of the three cities have put their stamp of approval upon the work has been the means of bringing many young people and adults to the Center. The various factory and mill superintendents have also lent their assistance by placing placards containing announcements and

schedules in conspicuous places in their plants. It is of interest to note in this connection, that many of the employers are beginning to realize that the use of leisure time has a definite bearing upon the use to which their employees will put their hours of work, and that the men and women who spend their leisure in healthful recreation are more likely to be efficient than the employees whose leisure is spent in more questionable ways.

Co-operation with the Tri-City Health Department (Hygienic Institute) and the Tri-city Associated Charities has yielded results of mutual significance. The Health Department has been especially helpful through solving problems of sanitation, particularly in regard to the swimming pools, by examining swimmers to detect weak hearts and communicable diseases, and by administering First Aid in cases of accidents that are too serious for the Social Center officials to take care of.

Mention should also be made of the help given by the women of the tri-cities, especially by the members of the La Salle Women's Club, the Women's Club of Peru and the Oglesby Women's Club. The Commercial Associations of the three cities, lodges, clubs and various civic organizations have shown their interest by presenting trophies for juvenile competition in the Grade and Parochial School Athletic Association. And especially helpful has been the spirit of co-operation exhibited by individual business men and merchants. Not once when requested has assistance been refused, and while the financial help so offered has materially aided the progress of the work, the moral support implied has been unquestionably greater.

Building and Equipment

The Social Center Recreation Building includes a large gymnasium, an indoor swimming pool, a men's club room, a large party room, reading and silent game rooms, a meeting room, and an auditorium. In addition there is a director's office, an apparatus room, four large locker and dressing rooms together with five toilet rooms. Outdoors there is a large athletic field, a playground, an outdoor swimming pool and three tennis courts.

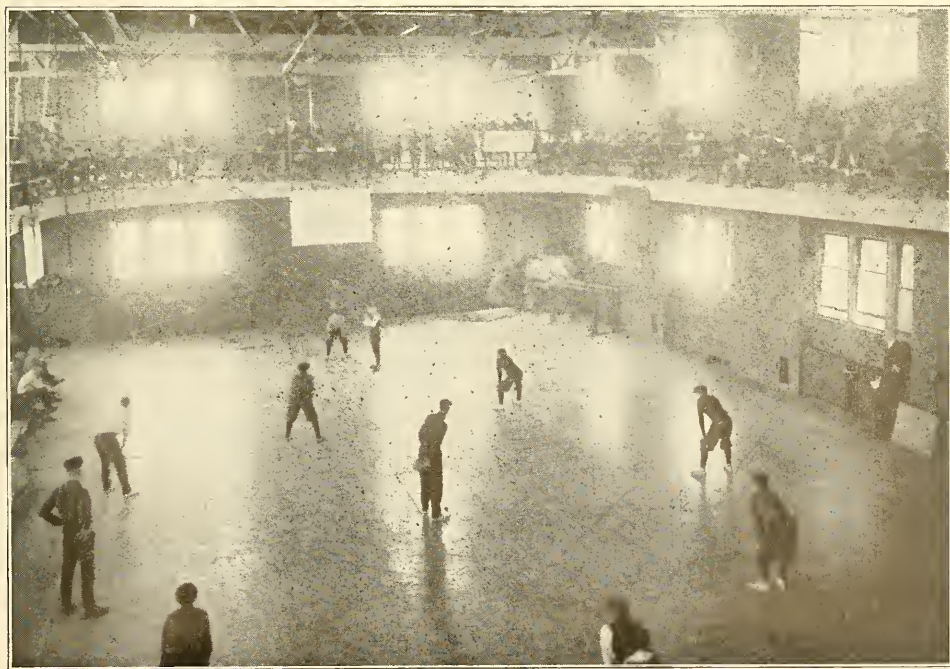
The Gymnasium

The most popular feature of the Recreation Building is the gymnasium, which is 53x106 feet. It contains a playing space for basketball 37x70 feet, an indoor baseball diamond and two volley ball courts. About twelve feet above the floor is the balcony, which is used both for spectators and as a running track. No part of the basketball court is underneath the gallery. The gymnasium equipment is quite complete and consists of a piano, two parallel bars, one horse, two bucks, two horizontal bars, one horizontal ladder, a trapeze, traveling rings, flying rings, a punching bag platform, a swinging boom, stall-bars, a giant stride, two ropes and one pole for climbing, two score-boards and movable bleachers. The equipment also includes wands, indian clubs, dumb-bells, equipment for two volley ball courts, jumping and vaulting apparatus, eight medicine balls, ten mats, balance rails, spring-boards, and paraphernalia for tug-of-war, shot put and for various games. The Social Center owns in common with the Hygienic Institute special apparatus for physical measurements, such as an anthropometric scale, a stadiometer, a spirometer, a manometer, a dynamometer and chest and shoulder calipers. Adjoining the gymnasium is an apparatus room where the movable apparatus is stored when not in use.

The rental fee of the gymnasium for independent basketball and indoor baseball games is fifty per cent of the net receipts, with a minimum of five dollars and a maximum of fifteen dollars. When the gymnasium is used for a public dance, the fee is ten dollars.



THE SOCIAL CENTER RECREATION BUILDING



AN INDOOR BASEBALL GAME

The Indoor Swimming Pool and Showers

Downstairs, beneath the gymnasium, is the swimming pool which is 25x60 feet. The depth of the water varies from three feet to nearly eight feet. Every Saturday afternoon the pool is emptied, thoroughly cleaned, and fresh water run in. All bathers are required to take shower baths before entering the pool. The bacteriologist of the Hygienic Institute makes occasional tests of the water, and every effort is made to keep the pool reasonably free from contamination. A chlorinator and filter system are now being installed.

Along the east side of the pool are eight dressing booths and eight showers.

Locker and Dressing Rooms

Adjoining the pool is the locker-cage, which contains locker-boxes arranged in rows and numbered according to the Kansas City system. This arrangement provides a small locker-box for every person using the gymnasium or pool, and in this box is kept the owner's athletic clothing. Opening into the natatorium are three large dressing rooms equipped with steel lockers and benches.

The Towel System

Bath towels are provided for all who care to use them. A deposit of fifty cents is required to cover the cost of the towel and to insure its return; a towel ticket good for twenty towels is sold for twenty-five cents. This ticket is kept on file at the locker cage, and every time a towel is taken the ticket is punched, and punched again to show the return of the towel. A refund is made on the deposit and unused portions of the ticket on demand. A soap vending machine provides soap at a cost of one cent.

The Men's Club Room

Across the hall from the natatorium is a room 20x26 feet, equipped for a men's club room. This room is practically fire-proof, and is the only place in the building where smoking is permitted. In the afternoons the room is used as a game room for boys, but no boys are admitted in the evening.

When the building was erected, a room downstairs, 16x86 feet, was reserved for a bowling alley; but this plan was finally abandoned and the room is to be partitioned off into a store-room, a drying room for bathing suits, and a dressing room for the women attendants. The electric exhaust fan which ventilates the entire building is located at the end of this room.

The Reception Room

The Reception Room, which is 30x48 feet, is located upstairs in the new addition to the building. It has a small cloak room adjoining, and a kitchenette equipped with a gas range, sink, table, cupboards and kitchen utensils. There are sufficient knives, forks, spoons and dishes for a party of fifty. The equipment of the Reception Room also includes a piano, a phonograph, a tea cart, six card tables and about sixty chairs. This room is easily the most beautiful part of the Social Center. It is artistically decorated, and the walls are a neutral tint, making it an ideal setting for art exhibitions as well as dances and parties. The rental fee for this room is one dollar up to ten o'clock, and a dollar for each additional hour until twelve o'clock when the room must be vacated. On special occasions the time may be extended to one o'clock by arranging beforehand with the Director.

The Reading Room and Silent Game Room

The Reading Room is also located in the new addition, and, like the Reception Room, is beautifully decorated. This room has been made as attractive as possible; it was furnished by the classes of 1911 and 1914 with the best of library furniture, the walls are hung with copies of several famous pictures, and trophy cups and shields add to its attractiveness. The Reading Room is equipped with three large reading tables, a newspaper rack, a magazine rack, an atlas stand, a bulletin board, an attendant's desk, book shelves and about forty chairs. More than twenty popular magazines and periodicals, several newspapers and a growing collection of books on all topics for all ages and sexes furnish adequate reading material for those who crowd the room.

Opening into the Reading Room and serving as a sort of annex is the Quiet Game Room. This room is equipped with chairs and small tables, and a large built-in cabinet in which games and supplies are stored. None but quiet games, such as chess, checkers and dominoes are allowed. The fact that these two rooms are connected by a large opening makes it possible for one attendant to supervise both.

The Lecture Room

One of the High School class-rooms, located on the third floor of the Social Center Building, is used as a lecture-room or meeting-room. This is a large and beautiful room, equipped with a piano and having a seating capacity of seventy-five. There are so many different groups and organizations using the Social Center as headquarters that the demand for a meet-

ing-room is very great, and often it is necessary to use other high school classrooms for this purpose.

Director's Office and Miscellaneous

In addition to the rooms and equipment already mentioned, the Social Center Building contains a Director's office, adequate drinking fountains, lavatories, toilets and janitors' closets.

The Auditorium

The auditorium is located on the ground floor of the main high school building and has an independent entrance to the street. It has a seating capacity of over six hundred, and is modelled after the Little Theatre of New York City. The large stage contains four complete sets of scenes and a handsome silk-velour draw curtain donated by the classes of 1912, 1913, 1918 and 1919. There are also three pianos, one donated by the orchestra, one by the class of 1917, and one, a new Mason and Hamlin grand, bought by the classes of 1921 and 1922, which is used only for concerts and special occasions. The auditorium can be used by any organization or group for a nominal fee to cover the cost of light and janitor service.

Matthiessen Athletic Field and Playground

In connection with the Social Center Building there is a large Athletic Field of eleven acres. The field includes a five-lap cinder track, a baseball diamond, a football field, and jumping and vaulting pits. On the south side of the field is a concrete grand-stand with a seating capacity of five hundred. It is equipped with a drinking fountain and men's and women's toilets. Nearby are two tennis courts.

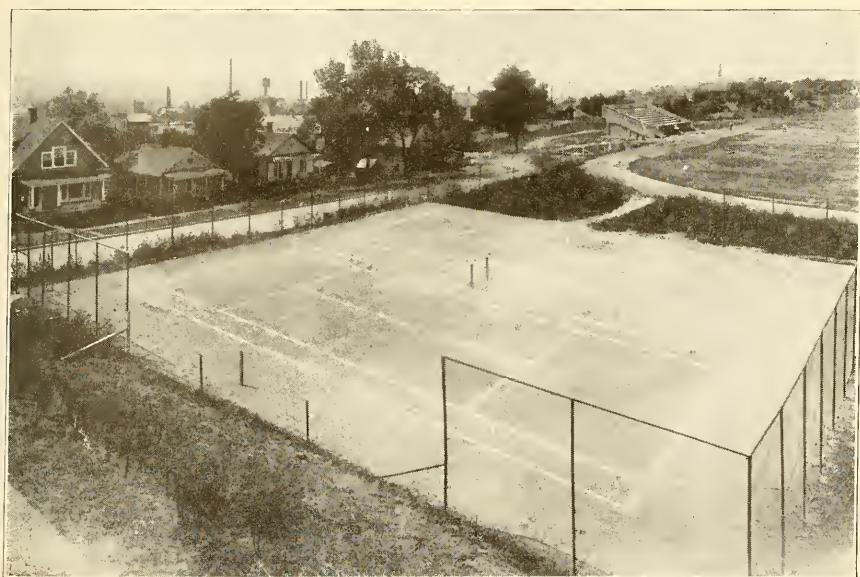
Adjoining the Athletic Field, which is used mainly by men and older boys, and which has been named in honor of its donor, Mr. Matthiessen, is the Playground for the use of the smaller boys and girls. The playground is simply equipped and includes a baseball diamond, and basketball and volley ball courts.

The Outdoor Swimming Pool

Conveniently near the athletic grounds is the outdoor swimming pool, which is the most enjoyed of all the outdoor features. The dimensions of this pool are 50x100 feet, and the depth of the water varies from two to eight feet. The bath-house contains an attendants' office, showers, toilets, a store room, twenty dressing booths and lockers for one hundred people.



THE OUTDOOR SWIMMING POOL



THE TENNIS COURTS AND ATHLETIC FIELD

Social Center Activities

It is practically impossible to give a clear and comprehensive account of the activities that are carried on by the Social Center, because of the fact that they are necessarily of such a changing nature. This is particularly true of the strictly non-athletic activities. Each runs its course, plays out in interest, and must be followed by another. The success of any activity depends largely upon the enthusiasm, endurance and creative power of the instructor, but also upon the whims of the public, the weather, and the athletic and social fashions of the day.

One factor that has been responsible for the relatively small participation of older groups is the distance of the Center from the main residential and business sections. This disadvantage of location has naturally operated, more or less, against non-athletic activities, for it is from among the older people that the majority of non-athletic groups of community activities are recruited. On the other hand, the Social Center has always attracted large numbers of the younger people, especially young men and boys. And with the wonderful facilities for athletics in all its forms, the emphasis has naturally been placed upon athletic activities. Organization has followed the line of popular interest.

It is difficult to estimate the benefits that the public derives from the Social Center. For the most part they are of a very intangible nature. It is easy enough, for example, to see the wonderful physical development of the boys and young men who have taken advantage of the gymnasium and other athletic facilities over a period of time, or to understand the advantages of warm shower baths to people who are unaccustomed to bath tubs. It is more difficult to estimate the amount of good that is being done in the way of Americanization and socialization indirectly through sports and games, or to appreciate the educational advantages derived from the reading room, lectures and exhibits of various kinds. Certain it is that the Social Center fills a real need, and it is significant that the only discipline or punishment ever found necessary for misconduct or a breach of the rules is temporary suspension from the building and grounds.



Folk Dancing Class of Grade and Parochial School Girls.
Meetings bi-weekly.



Story Telling Class for smaller grade and parochial school girls. In these classes High School girls who are taking the Teachers' Course do the story telling. These classes have been imitated in the playgrounds throughout the entire district.



First Aid Class for adults and young men. Given by the officers of the Illinois State Mine Rescue Station. This instruction was also given to high school students as well as to citizens. Home Nursing classes have been given for women.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Auditorium Events

The Social Center is the logical place for conventions, lectures, dramatic performances, and educational work of a public nature. Hardly a week passes without a lecture or public discussion of some sort in the auditorium or lecture room. The Red Cross, the Associated Charities, the Women's Club, the University Club, the High School, the Social Center and other public and private organizations all co-operate to keep the community informed on the important topics of the day. The Polish and Italians frequently hold large public meetings and invite prominent men to discuss subjects of particular interest to them. Art Exhibits and Better Homes Exhibits are held, and some of the best musical and dramatic talent in the country is engaged.

However, the community does not have to depend entirely on professional entertainers, for it is rich in dramatic and musical talent. The fact that so many races are represented makes possible great variety in the form and character of "home talent" entertainments. The Poles, especially, are interested in dramatics and usually three or more plays in the Polish language are given annually in the auditorium.

Community singing is quite popular and several successful "sings" have been held. There are two choral clubs which meet at the Social Center, the Community Chorus and the Polish National Alliance Chorus. Associated with the Community Chorus is the Community Orchestra. These organizations have done much in a musical way for the community.

Dances and Parties

Since the addition of the Reception Room, the Social Center has become a Social Center in the fullest sense of the word. The demand for this room is constantly increasing and almost nightly it is the scene of a dance or party of some sort. In fact the Reception Room bids fair to rival the gymnasium in popularity. The small rental fee makes it possible for people of all classes to use the room, and this fact has had much to do with its popularity. While dances have not been conducted by the Center itself, nevertheless they are carefully supervised and a chaperon acceptable to the Director must be present. Parties are very often made up with the understanding that each person shall pay his part of the expense of the music and refreshments. When a group wishes to hold a larger dance, the gymnasium is used. There is sufficient dancing space in the gymnasium to accommodate over one hundred couples, while the dancing floor of

the Reception Room cannot accommodate more than fifty couples.

Clubs

A large number of clubs of varied kinds and purposes are associated with the Social Center, and make use of its meeting rooms. One of the most important of these is the Women's Club, which holds a number of its more important meetings and programs at the Social Center. The Mothers' Club is organized for social, gymnastic and educational work; it holds weekly meetings in the reception room. The University Club is an organization of the college people of the three cities, the object of which is to promote civic betterment. The High School Alumni Association uses the Social Center facilities for most of its activities which are mainly of an athletic and social nature. The Polish Falcons is an athletic and military organization of Polish men, who hold periodic meetings in the gymnasium. Three troops of Boy Scouts make use of the Social Center; these do not include the Polish Boy Scouts, not affiliated with the national organization, who have now become the American Boys' Club. There are twelve young men's and boys' Social Center clubs organized for social and athletic purposes. Many other clubs make their headquarters at the Social Center and are dependent on it for athletics. Boys' and young men's clubs have always been successful and there is an unusual interest in clubs particularly among boys of foreign nationalities. In most cases these clubs have developed from boys' gangs, and this accounts largely for their success and permanence. And the fact, too, that most of the clubs have a Social Center attendant appointed to aid them in their organization and athletics has contributed to their success. Most of these clubs are represented in the Junior and Men's Athletic Leagues; and in practically every case athletics is their interest.

Girls' clubs in the Social Center have never been so successful as boys' clubs and have usually been short-lived.

Festivals

A Christmas festival and a May festival are given annually by the Social Center. The Christmas Festival is held just before the holidays in the gymnasium, which is appropriately decorated for the occasion. The lights are dimmed and a large tree, electrically lighted, furnishes a brilliant background for the Christmas story which is portrayed by singing, dancing and pantomime. The solo and group dancing does much to make the Christmas Festival the most beautiful and artistic of all the Social Center events.

The Social Center and the La Salle Playground Association co-operate for the May Festival. This is held outdoors and is characterized by the usual May-pole dances, drills and singing games. Usually several hundred children take part in this festival.

Reading and Quiet Games

Every effort is made to make the Reading Room as attractive as possible. The books and periodicals are largely of a popular nature, and reading is encouraged particularly among boys and young men. Books on gardening, poultry-raising, simple mechanics, accounting and various other vocational subjects are featured. The bulletin-board is used to call attention to new books and interesting articles in the periodicals.

Opening into the Reading Room is the Quiet Game Room, where games such as chess, checkers and dominoes are played. This room is especially popular during the winter months. In order to make the games more interesting and to furnish an incentive to better playing, a series of chess and checker tournaments are held yearly. As a result of these tournaments, many excellent players have been developed.

Playground Activities

In June, 1921, the new Social Center playground was opened to the public. Among the activities which have been developed and which have been planned for the future are: a baseball league for older boys, a playground baseball league for younger boys, basketball leagues for both boys and girls, volley ball games, horse-shoe tournaments, track meets and badge tests for boys and girls, folk-dancing, singing games, sand play and story telling for the smaller children, and various games and play on the apparatus.

Picnics and Outings

For several years an annual picnic has been held by the Social Center to conclude the summer's activities. Over eight hundred children attended the last one. This group was so large and unwieldy that it was difficult to handle; and the cost assumed such proportions that it was necessary to call upon the citizens for contributions, a practice which the Social Center is trying to discontinue. On this account the annual picnic has now been discontinued in favor of small picnics and outings, self-financed. Many of these small picnics are held during the summer, the size of the groups varying from fifteen to fifty. These are much easier to handle and are more enjoyed by the children.



KITE MAKING



A SOCIAL CENTER PICNIC

Community Gardening

The war necessitated many changes in the activities of the Social Center. In addition to the First Aid and Home Nursing classes, a course in radio telegraphy was organized and a room equipped for this purpose. Classes in mathematics were also held for young men who were preparing for the S. A. T. C. Community Gardening was undertaken by the High School Agricultural Department in co-operation with the Illinois Valley Manufacturers Club and the La Salle Chamber of Commerce. This is the only war activity that has survived. The work has been so successful that plans have been made to make it a permanent activity of the community. In a single year as many as one hundred seventy-seven families have worked community gardens, cultivating in all over thirty-five acres of land, and producing \$5,000 worth of vegetables.

Public Hygiene

The hygienic work is, of course, under the direction of the Hygienic Institute, but the Social Center co-operates in every way possible. A series of home nursing classes was held at the Social Center under the direction of trained nurses. First Aid classes under the direction of trained men from the local Mine Rescue Station and the Director of the Hygienic Institute are held. Frequent lectures are given on health and social hygiene topics; exhibits borrowed from the State Board of Health are shown, and government health pamphlets are distributed. Indeed every effort is being made to aid the government in its social hygiene campaign.

ATHLETIC ACTIVITIES

During the Fall and Winter most of the athletic activities center around the gymnasium. On school days the gymnasium is used from 9:00 to 3:30 for high school gymnasium classes, and the remainder of the afternoons is for the most part turned over to high school activities. At night the gymnasium is used entirely by the Social Center. Monday is women's night; the rest of the evenings with the exception of Sunday and sometimes Saturday are taken up by men and older boys. Each evening, except game evenings, is divided into three periods: 7:00 to 8:00, 8:00 to 9:00, and 9:00 to 10:00. Hours are assigned to different groups, who have exclusive use of the gymnasium for that hour. Saturdays are devoted entirely to grade school boys and girls, the boys having the mornings and the girls the afternoons.

In summer the gymnasium is partly closed, and practically all the athletic activities of the Social Center are con-

ducted on the Athletic Field and Playground. The Athletic Field is used by the men and older boys and the Playground is reserved for the girls and younger boys. In the fall the Athletic Field is used for high school and independent football teams' practice and games. In the spring it is used for high school and grade school track and field events.

Men's Athletic Activities

Men's Indoor Baseball League

One of the most popular games at the Social Center is indoor baseball. Every fall three indoor baseball leagues are formed; one for men, one for youths between the ages of 13 and 17 years who belong to Social Center Clubs, and a third for grade school boys. The most important of these is the men's league. It usually consists of eight teams representing industries, athletic clubs, and local organizations more or less permanently organized. Usually more than eight teams desire to enter the league and a series of games is played to eliminate all but the eight strongest teams. Early in September each team is given a weekly practice hour in the gymnasium, and the regular schedule is opened early in October. Two games are played every Tuesday and Thursday evening, this enables all eight teams to play one game each week. A small admission fee of ten or fifteen cents is charged to cover the cost of baseballs and bats, paying umpires, buying a trophy for the championship team, and other expenses of the league. The games are well attended, for each team has a host of supporters who never fail to show their enthusiasm. These annual leagues have developed some very good indoor baseball players, and each succeeding year the games are better and more closely contested. In addition to the regular league games a number of match games are played in the gymnasium between various local teams and out-of-town teams. The season extends up to about Christmas when basketball takes its place.

Men's Basketball League

Judging from the number of participants in the game, basketball is probably the favorite sport at the Social Center. Every winter a men's basketball league is organized. This usually consists of six to eight teams made up of the best basketball players in the tri-cities. The league is organized along the same line as the indoor baseball league; three games are played every Tuesday evening, and a small admission fee, usually fifteen cents, is charged to purchase a trophy and cover the other expenses of the league. There are several in-

dependent teams not connected with the league who use the Social Center gymnasium for their practice and games. Among the more important of these are the High School Alumni team and the Social Center team, representing the league, and the Social Center league.

Men's Twilight Baseball League

As an outgrowth of the Daylight Saving Law the Men's Twilight Baseball League was organized. Games are played from the latter part of May to the beginning of September. The league usually consists of eight teams and games are played four nights each week; Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, starting at 6:15 and continuing until dusk. This usually gives plenty of time for a seven-inning game. No admission fee is charged, but, in order to finance the league, a collection is taken during each game. Usually about sixty games are played during the season and the attendance varies from 350 to 2,000. Although the repeal of the Daylight Saving Law considerably shortened the time for the games, the Social Center Twilight Leagues were so successful that there are this summer (1921) three men's twilight leagues in the tri-cities; a La Salle playground league, an Oglesby industrial league, and the Social Center league.

Junior Athletic Activities

Junior Indoor Baseball League

The Junior Indoor Baseball League is organized at about the same time in the Fall as the Men's League and is usually made up of eight teams representing Social Center clubs. Three games are played every week, usually on Saturday night. The fact that most of the boys who take part in Junior League events are employed during the day makes it necessary to hold their activities during the evening, Sundays and holidays. Each team is required to make a small deposit, a part of which is retained to buy a trophy for the championship team. Admission to the games is free, and the small boys and supporters of the teams take advantage of this fact and crowd the gallery on game nights. The balls and bats used in this league are the old ones saved from the men's league, so that the expenses of the league are practically nothing.

Junior Basketball League

Usually about eight Social Center clubs enter teams in the Junior Basketball League. All boys belonging to Social Center clubs between the ages of 13 and 17 years are eligible to play in this league except boys who are members of the



High School first team or class teams. Three games are played every Saturday night and alternate Wednesday nights. As in the case of the indoor baseball league, the admission is free and the championship trophy is provided for in the same way. Basketball is so popular among the older boys that in order to give teams who can not take part in the regular league an opportunity to compete with other teams, numerous match games are arranged by the Social Center, and at the end of the season a tournament is held. Usually about fifteen teams are entered, and the winning team is awarded an athletic banner.

Junior Indoor Track Meet

The Junior Indoor Track Meet is an annual event held in the Social Center gymnasium some evening during the last week in April. About seventy-five boys usually enter this meet. The events are as follows:

20 yard dash.	440 yard dash.
Standing broad jump.	Shot put.
220 yard dash.	Half mile run.
Running high jump.	Tug-of-War.
3-Lap (800 yard) Relay Race.	

Junior Outdoor Baseball League

The Junior Outdoor Baseball League is organized in May and continues until late in the summer. The games are played on Matthiessen Athletic Field, and because of the fact that most of the boys are employed, practically all the games are played on Sunday. The boys of each team furnish their own balls, bats and gloves, so that it is not necessary to charge admission or take up a collection at the games.

Junior Miscellaneous Activities

The above leagues and meets by no means comprise all of the athletic activities for older boys. In the Fall when football is the favorite sport, a series of match games is held on the athletic field between different club teams, but no regular league is organized.

There is also a great deal of rivalry among these clubs in swimming and in tennis, and many impromptu matches are held.

Grade and Parochial School Activities

The nine grade schools and seven parochial schools of the three cities are organized into an athletic association

under the direction of the Social Center. The superintendents of the grade schools and the rectors of the parochial schools together with the Social Center Director form an advisory board. This board meets annually in September and at any other time that the Director deems advisable. There is also a Boys' Committee made up of one representative from each school to take care of minor details. This association includes all Social Center activities for the grade and parochial school boys and girls of the Township. The trophies for the different leagues and contests, usually shields and loving cups, are presented by some local club, civic organization or business firm. A school must win these trophies three times in order to claim them permanently.

Besides gymnasium and swimming classes for both boys and girls, the activities of this league consist of an indoor baseball league, a spring outdoor baseball league, athletic proficiency tests, swimming proficiency tests, an indoor track meet for boys, an indoor track meet for girls, a boys' outdoor track meet and many other activities as the sequel will show.

Boys' Indoor Baseball League

Usually ten schools of the tri-cities enter teams in the boys' indoor baseball league. The season extends from the latter part of October to early Spring. Two games are played every Saturday morning and one on alternate Friday afternoons. There is no admission fee for the games of this league, and all are well attended by the boys and girls of the schools. The expenses of the league are borne by the Social Center.

Boys' Outdoor Baseball League

As soon as the indoor baseball season is over, an outdoor baseball league is organized. The games are all played on Matthiessen Athletic Field. This league is similar to the indoor baseball league except that the boys of each team furnish their own bats, balls and gloves. The season extends from the latter part of April until school closes in June.

Boys' Indoor Track Meet

The Boys' Indoor Track Meet is an annual event held on Washington's Birthday in the Social Center gymnasium. Usually from eight to ten schools enter teams in the meet, and the rivalry between the different schools is very keen. In order to give the smaller boys an incentive to participate the contestants are divided into two classes. All boys over 4 feet 10 inches are put in Class A; and all under 4 feet 10

inches are put in Class B. The events for both classes are as follows:

20 Yard Dash.	Running High Jump.
Standing Broad Jump.	Chinning Contest.
Potato Race.	3-Lap Relay (240 yards).
Tug-of-War.	

Five points are allowed for first place, three for second, two for third and one for fourth. The school scoring the largest number of points is awarded the trophy, a silver loving cup.

Girls' Indoor Track Meet

The Girls' Indoor Track Meet is held annually the latter part of May in the Social Center gymnasium. Usually about eight schools enter teams. The rivalry and interest in this meet equals that of the boys' track meet and the gallery is always crowded with spectators on this occasion. The contestants are divided into two classes: all girls over 4 feet 8 inches are put in Class A, and all girls under that height are put in Class B. The trophy for this event is a silver loving cup usually presented by one of the Women's Clubs of the three cities. The events for both classes are as follows:

Running High Jump.	Basketball Throw (Distance).
One Lap Race (80 yds).	Traveling Rings.
Standing Broad Jump.	Rope Climbing.
2-Lap Relay Race (160 yards).	

Boys' Outdoor Track Meet

An annual Boys' Outdoor Track Meet is held on Matthiessen Athletic Field in the Spring, usually the first week in June. Practically the same number of schools enter this meet and the class divisions are the same as in the boys' indoor meet. The events are as follows:

100 Yard Dash.	220 Yard Dash.
Running High Jump.	Standing Broad Jump.
8-lb. Shot Put.	50 Yard Dash.
Half Mile Relay.	

Athletic Proficiency Tests

Since most boys and girls are not able to compete on their school teams, a set of athletic proficiency tests with gold, silver and bronze medals as rewards are given monthly. During the summer the standard athletic tests of the Playground and Recreation Association of America for both boys and girls are given on the Social Center playground, with the regulation medals as rewards. From September to June athletic tests

devised by the Social Center are given in the gymnasium. Any grade and parochial school boy or girl is eligible to compete in these tests. These "medal contests" enable boys and girls to know how they measure up in comparison with other boys and girls of the same age and give them an opportunity to note their own development from month to month. A result of these tests has been the appearance of home-made apparatus for high jumping and chinning in many backyards where the boys of the neighborhood get in trim for the next medal contest.

The following table indicates the standards that the boys must reach to win medals in the gymnasium athletic tests:

	1-Lap Race	Chinning	High Jump	Broad Jump	3-Lap Race
Bronze....	13 sec.	5 times	3 ft. 4 in.	6 ft.	40 sec.
Silver.....	12 sec.	7 times	3 ft. 8 in.	7 ft.	38 sec.
Gold.....	11 sec.	10 times	4 ft. 2 in.	7 ft. 9 in.	36 sec.

The standards for girls are as follows:

	1-Lap Race	High Jump	Broad Jump	Traveling Rings	Basketball Throw, Ten Trials
Bronze....	13 2-5 sec.	2 ft. 8 in.	5 ft. 6 in.	8	3 goals
Silver	12 2-5 sec.	3 ft. 4 in.	6 ft. 6 in.	16	5 goals
Gold.....	11 2-5 sec.	3 ft. 9 in.	7 ft. 3 in.	24	7 goals

Girls' Afternoon Classes

Three afternoon classes are held weekly for grade and parochial school girls. These classes meet on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons from 4:00 to 5:30 o'clock, and on Saturday afternoons from 2:00 to 5:00. The Tuesday afternoon class is for girls from the first to the fourth grades, and the program consists of story plays, folk dancing, singing games and story telling. The Thursday class includes girls from the fourth to the eighth grades. These girls are given calisthenics and drills in addition to folk dancing, games and story telling. All grade and parochial school girls are welcome to the Saturday afternoon classes where they participate in games of all sorts in addition to the activities mentioned above. The girls of these classes take a prominent part in the annual Social Center festivals.

During the summer the program for these classes is more varied. Much of the time is spent outdoors, and many picnics and hikes are enjoyed. At various times sewing, raffia work, clay modelling and scrapbook making have been popular with the smaller girls. Usually two big parties are given annually for these groups of girls. The attendance at the Tuesday and Thursday classes average about sixty, while considerably more attend the Saturday afternoon class.

Women's Athletic Activities

Soon after the opening of the Social Center swimming became so popular with the girls and women that it was necessary to employ a special swimming instructor for them. And ever since swimming has been the most attractive feature for women and girls. Women's gymnasium classes have also rapidly gained in favor. In fact women's activities have become so important that it has been necessary to turn Monday evenings over almost entirely to the women. On this night only women are allowed in the indoor swimming pool, and women's physical training classes are held in the gymnasium. The popularity of these classes is shown by the fact that more than 150 women are regularly enrolled. The program consists largely of Swedish gymnastics, folk dancing, and such games as volley ball, basketball, indoor baseball and various less organized games. Gymnastic work, however, is not the sole attraction, for these classes are also of a social nature. In fact many women who have not the slightest interest in gymnastics attend these classes in order to spend a pleasant evening. These women are from all walks of life and vary widely in age, but a very democratic spirit prevails and such a thing as snobbery is practically unknown. Probably the most enjoyable social features of the classes are the three big parties which are given annually; the Hallowe'en party, the St. Valentine's party and the Spring party. A picnic early in the summer usually concludes the activities for the season.

Swimming

In the summer time the large attendance at both pools indicates that swimming is the most popular Social Center activity. The outdoor pool is used exclusively for men and boys. Boys' classes are held from 9:30 to 11:30 a. m. and from 2:00 to 5:00 p. m.; men's classes from 5:00 to 6:00 and from 7:00 to 9:00 p. m. The classes in the outdoor pool are an hour in length; this includes time for undressing and dressing. Four life-guards and attendants, who must qualify as expert swimmers, are employed during the Summer for the outdoor pool.

During the summer, the indoor pool is used exclusively by the women and girls. There are classes during the mornings, afternoons and evenings for women and girls of different ages. In the evenings the pool is used entirely by women, with the exception of one hour each week which is devoted to a married couples' swimming class.

When the outdoor pool is closed in September, a re-



Womens' Gym Class



Heart Examination



Reading Room

arrangement is made in the schedule so that the indoor pool can accommodate all. During school hours the pool is used for high school classes. After 3:30 on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, the pool is used by girls and women until 5:00 o'clock. On Wednesday night from 8:00 to 9:00 a married couples' class has the use of the pool. Swimming classes for boys are held on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, Friday evenings, Saturday mornings, and on Monday and Wednesday afternoons from 5:00 to 6:00. Men use the pool on Tuesday and Thursday nights.

The classes during both the summer and the winter are always well attended, and, as a result of this intensive use of the pools, practically every man, woman and child who frequents the Social Center is able to swim.

Swimming Proficiency Tests

As an inducement to greater proficiency in swimming a monogram of white felt composed of the letters "S. C." is awarded to boys who swim 200 yards and to girls and women who swim 60 yards. A monogram is also given to men and older boys who swim 200 yards in four minutes and five seconds.

Swimming Meets

Early in June a women's swimming meet is held, with the married women competing against the unmarried. Strange as it may seem the married women usually win the meet. This event always draws a large crowd of spectators, and, to pay for the handsome monograms which are given as prizes and to cover other expenses, an admission fee of ten cents is charged.

Late in the summer a swimming meet is held in the indoor pool for grade and parochial school girls, and another in the outdoor pool for grade and parochial school boys. The contestants enter the meets as individuals and not as representatives of their schools. There are always a large number of entries and some fine records are made. Point winners are awarded appropriate monograms.

An especially interesting feature of the children's swimming is the number of little girls who dive. The fearlessness with which they do all sorts of fancy dives and their ease and confidence while in the pool are a remarkable sight to those adults who are not at home in the water.

The Shower Baths

On account of the great popularity of the swimming pools the importance of the shower baths is apt to be lost

sight of. There is always an abundance of warm water, and large numbers of people, both grown-ups and children, lacking other bathing facilities, depend entirely on the Social Center showers for baths. During the influenza epidemic and later at the time of the coal miners' strike, it was necessary to close the Center for several weeks; and, when it was reopened, the appearance of many of the small boys who came to swim showed plainly how dependent they were on the Center for their baths. Soap was distributed and it was a most amusing sight to see these boys trying to get themselves clean enough to satisfy the swimming pool attendant.

Tennis

In the past tennis has not been a popular game in the tri-cities, but owing largely to efforts on the part of the Social Center, its popularity is rapidly increasing, and, during the summer there is a great demand for the courts. Even barefooted boys are taking up the game and some exciting matches are played with home-made wooden paddles and rubber balls from the variety store. In order further to stimulate interest in tennis two annual tournaments are held, one for high school students in the Spring, and another in mid-summer for adults. Every year there are a larger number of contestants, and the playing is of a superior type with each succeeding tourney. The most coveted trophy is that of the men's singles, a beautiful silver loving cup presented by the Western Clock Co. This cup must be won three times to become the property of the winner.

J. WYATT MARRS.

Attendance

The Social Center Director issues monthly and annually attendance reports which indicate the attendance according to age, sex, group and activity. These reports are compiled from estimates filed twice daily by members of the staff in charge of the different activities.

The following statistics are offered to show the extent to which the Social Center is used by the community, and to indicate the seasonal variations from month to month.

Total attendance for year (1920)	206,072
Average monthly attendance (12 months)	17,173
Average daily attendance (348 days)	592
Total number of men	22,496
Total number of women	15,255
Total number of boys	61,944
Total number of girls	41,871
Total mixed juvenile attendance	10,568
Total adult and juvenile attendance	38,575
Total mixed adult attendance	15,363
Total number of groups	5,320
Average number of groups per month	444
Average number of groups per day	15

Attendance by Months

January	13,760	July	22,371
February	14,746	August	18,724
March	15,464	September	9,468
April	15,027	October	18,321
May	19,625	November	19,564
June	19,552	December	19,450



A GOODEFELLOWS' CLUB CHRISTMAS PARTY

BUILDING A CIVIC CENTER AROUND A TRI-CITY HIGH SCHOOL.

BY GRAHAM TAYLOR.*

A Tribute to Mr. F. W. Matthiessen.

What a high school may be to a town is being more broadly understood and more widely discovered. But real inventive genius was required to create a civic center for three cities around one high school. This could be done for La Salle, Peru and Oglesby, Ill., because the three municipalities are all included within the six square miles which constitute one of those "congressional townships" into which the United States survey divides each section of land, and because Illinois law authorizes a high school board to levy taxes upon and for a congressional township.

The natural rivalry between towns growing up separately so close together long delayed that co-operation through which each of them could only hope for modern equipment and service. There was one citizen, however, who had grown up with the towns whose democratic hope for united action to promote the public welfare was undaunted. [This man was Mr. F. W. Matthiessen.] He had come to America in 1853 at eighteen years of age from Schleswig-Holstein to investigate mineral resources with a view to their development. Returning to Germany, he devoted three years to courses in metallurgy and mining at the Technical School of Freiberg, where he met his future partner and life-long associate in business, the late E. C. Hegeler, who developed inventive genius and masterful yet democratic management.

After another year's study at Heidelberg, the two young students in 1857 located at this point in Illinois because it was the nearest reliable coal deposit to the Wisconsin zinc ore fields and had available transportation facilities and possibilities by water and rail. Here they planted the Matthiessen-Hegeler Zinc Works and with their scientific equipment, thus patiently and thoroughly acquired, they laid siege to nature in planning and developing their half century's work together. Their great success was achieved, not by any "luck" or speculative chance, but by foresight, which was even more scientific than prophetic. They knew what could be done with the natural resources, the rare combination of which prompted the designation of this region as "nature's demonstrating plant." Whoever thus designated it calls attention to nature's "wonderful foresight in using as a foundation a deposit of stone, which should remain untouched for thousands of years, while on and over this foundation she prepared those things which would in turn draw to this spot men who would develop her various forms of wealth, including this very foundation itself."

Cropping out at the surface alongside the veins of coal are the deep underlying rocks supplying material for three great Portland cement works and also for the manufacture of glass. These quarries furnish labor for 750 men and produce annually 4,639,396 barrels of cement. The coal deposits have developed 21 coal mines now supporting 7,544 mine

*Reprinted with permission from The Survey for October 17, 1914.



THE HYGIENIC INSTITUTE

workmen and their families. Including three zinc plants these industries and the rich soil productive of the staple crops valued annually at \$12,000,000, support within a radius of ten miles a population of 55,000, very cosmopolitan in birth and language. Waterways and hydraulic power were supplied by the Illinois River and the Illinois and Michigan Canal. Steam and electric railways connect this industrial garden of the gods with the Great Lakes and the Mississippi Valley.

The work of this pioneer captain of industry was from first to last for others as much as for self, for the whole community even more than for his family. Well aware of what he owed to education, Mr. Matthiessen coveted for his fellow workers and townfolk the best schools available. After the grade schools were well established, he first suggested a township high school for the three cities. When the bond issue for it was voted down, because of the rivalry of the three cities, he quietly and uncomplainingly awaited the next opportunity to suggest and support the proposition again, telling his neighbors that "the children should not suffer for any failure of their elders." In 1898 their parents thought so too and voted to erect the La Salle-Peru Township High School. Five years later Mrs. F. W. Matthiessen erected a Manual Training and Domestic Science Building. Both are finely equipped with every modern appliance from a physics laboratory to all the apparatus of a practical agricultural department, from a forge and lathe to a gas stove and a needle, from microscopes and dissecting instruments for biology to an art studio and a fine collection of pictures and statues which overflow the museum upon the school room walls and into the hallways. An assembly hall seating 600 people, modeled after the Little Theatre in New York city, is shared with the community.

Loving nature, the family have always let their fellow townfolk share the rest and recreation which they have had in their beautiful Deer Park, surrounding the summer homestead outlying the towns. In response to the inviting forest, the cool canyon, within whose rock-wall corral the Indians rounded up the deer, and the charming vistas of lawns and harvest fields, a great multitude from near and far resort for their evening or week-end outings. The 2,200 or more employes of the zinc and clock works, and many more thousands who work in the mines and plants of other employers have ever been held in mind. To bring recreation nearer home all the year around to these hard workers and their children a \$75,000 building for a social center was recently erected and deeded to the high school trustees. Its design was taken from the Great Lakes Naval Station building.

Attached to the main school building by a covered passage, it contains a spacious gymnasium, which is also used for large assemblies. Shower baths and swimming pools, library and reading facilities, * * * * * rooms for classes and clubs, for music and art, are on a generous scale. Away from this recreation center, and perhaps the most important part of it, stretch the twelve acres of land, awaiting the development of its fine possibilities for a playfield and an open air amphitheater.

To this civic center group has recently been added the most original and far-reaching agency of all—the Hygienic Institute. The health offices of the three cities had been only what the average town provides, which was far below the standard of community service set by the high school and its annexed agencies. Again the veteran promoter of public welfare proved adequate to the possibilities. His past experience as mayor of his town demonstrated the need and difficulty of combining the three cities in close co-operation to promote public health among an immigrant and shifting population increasingly in need of sanitary safeguards. The only legal provision was for a health officer in each city.

To increase the facilities for their service beyond the resources at the command of any of the cities, he established the Hygienic Institute alongside the high school, equipped with a bacteriological laboratory, a specialized library on medical and sanitary subjects, and a small staff



TRI-CITY ISOLATION HOSPITAL—Gift of F. W. Mathiessen.

of experts. Then he offered to furnish the salaries of the health officers of the three cities on condition that they should be appointed on the nomination of the director of the Hygienic Institute and should work in co-operation under his direction. This offer was accepted, and now one tri-city department of health serves the entire township. . . . School nurses and the local health officers visit the schools once a week to inspect the pupils for contagious or infectious diseases. Milk and food supplies are tested. Dairy herds and plants are kept under surveillance. Stagnant water is drained off. Drains and toilets are inspected. Sanitary police officers safeguard the streets and alleys. Physicians and druggists are supplied with tubes and smears, with directions for taking cultures in cases suspected of diphtheria, typhoid fever and tuberculosis. The results of laboratory tests are returned promptly to physicians. Posters and leaflets are circulated, containing "hints on fly extermination," and other sanitary instructions.

A fifth co-operating agency in this remarkable affiliation of volunteer and public institutions is the Infant Welfare Station, founded as a memorial to Emma Matthiessen Chancellor.

All these undertakings have been attempted and achieved in private co-operation with and under the final authority of the public administration of the township high school and the city councils.

The federal Bureau of Education has signalized this achievement as uniquely significant, by telling the story of it in Rural School Letter Number 21, under the title, A Township Community Center in Illinois. To realize all it means, however, one must not only read about it, but see it in action and talk with the people who got together to make it a reality. To sense it all one must feel the atmospheric pressure of the presence and personality of that silent, single-minded, simple-hearted man who exemplifies the democracy of wealth.

As much as, if not more than, any other man he is rounding out what Prof. Charles S. Nash terms "the mighty day's work" of democracy, "to face all that is disagreeable and problematic in democracy, concealing nothing, blinking nothing away, and at the same time to keep the will strong and temperate, so that its edge will never turn; to meet all social obligations properly, to pay all political debts joyously, never to throw a glance over the shoulder to the monastery."

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 019 605 238 0